

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 3 and amend claims 1 and 4 so that the claims hereafter read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A device for grasping and carrying thin cord-like objects comprising:

a hollow, substantially rigid shaft having a proximal end and a distal end, ~~said the~~ the distal end being pointed and adapted to pierce soft tissue, and a lumen extending from ~~said the~~ the proximal end to ~~said the~~ the distal end of said shaft;

a solid rod having a proximal end and a distal end, said rod being positioned in ~~said the~~ the lumen in reciprocally sliding relationship therewith;

first and second wire-like elements each having a distal end and a proximal end, said first and second wire-like elements being attached at their respective proximal ends to ~~said the~~ the distal end of said rod so as to extend distally therefrom and move in conjunction with said rod, said first wire-like element defining a hook-shaped configuration at ~~its the~~ the distal end thereof, ~~said second wire-like element defining a guide means at its distal end, and said distal ends of said first and second wire-like elements being spring biased away from one another; and~~

~~activation~~ actuation means attached to ~~said the~~ the proximal end of said rod and to ~~said the~~ the proximal end of said shaft for moving said rod and said wire-like elements between: (i) a first position wherein ~~said the~~ the distal ends of said wire-like elements are contained within said shaft in closely spaced relation to one another, and (ii) a second position wherein ~~said the~~ the distal ends of said wire-like elements extend outwardly from ~~said the~~ the distal

end of said shaft in flared relationship to one another, wherein
said actuation means comprises:

a housing attached to the proximal end of said shaft;
a trigger pivotally attached to said housing; and
a spring biased piston attached to the proximal end of
said rod and configured to slide within said housing so as to
move said rod between the first and second positions;

~~wherein said first wire-like element comprises a proximal~~
~~segment and a distal segment defining the hook-shaped~~
~~configuration and said second wire-like element comprises a~~
~~proximal segment and a distal segment, said second wire-like~~
~~element distal segment defining the guide means, and when said~~
~~wire-like elements are in the second position said first wire-~~
~~like element distal segment extends in a direction toward said~~
~~second wire-like element distal segment and substantially normal~~
~~to said second wire-like element distal segment;~~

said first and second wire-like elements being adapted so
that when said wire-like elements are in ~~said~~ the second
position, ~~said the distal ends of said first wire-like element~~
~~distal segment~~ and said ~~guide means~~ second wire-like element
cooperate to define a gap therebetween for receiving and trapping
~~said the~~ thin cord-like object, and ~~further~~ wherein ~~said the~~
distal end of said first wire-like element ~~guide means serve to~~
guide grasps said the thin cord-like object and carries the thin
cord-like object back toward and into the distal end of said
shaft into engagement with said hook-shaped distal end of said
~~first wire-like element~~ when said wire-like elements are moved
from ~~said the~~ the second position to ~~said the~~ the first position;

whereby said wire-like elements are further adapted to
secure ~~said the~~ the thin cord-like object to said shaft when said
wire-like elements are moved from ~~said the~~ the second position to

said the first position and release the thin cord-like object when said wire-like elements are moved from the first position to the second position.

2. (Original) A device according to claim 1 wherein said distal end of said shaft is curved.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A method for grasping and carrying a thin cord-like object comprising:

(1) providing a device comprising:

a hollow, substantially rigid shaft having a proximal end and a distal end, said the distal end being pointed and adapted to pierce soft tissue, and a lumen extending from said the proximal end to said the distal end of said shaft;

a solid rod having a proximal end and a distal end, said rod being positioned in said the lumen in reciprocally sliding relationship therewith;

first and second wire-like elements each having a distal end and a proximal end, said first and second wire-like elements being attached at their respective proximal ends to said the distal end of said rod so as to extend distally therefrom and move in conjunction with said rod, said first wire-like element defining a hook-shaped configuration at its the distal end thereof, ~~said second wire-like element defining a guide means at its distal end, and said distal ends of said first and second wire-like elements being spring biased away from one another; and~~ activation actuation means attached to said the proximal end of said rod and to said the proximal end of said shaft for moving said rod and said wire-like elements between (i)

a first position wherein ~~said~~ the distal ends of said wire-like elements are contained within said shaft in closely spaced relation to another, and (ii) a second position wherein ~~said~~ the distal ends of said wire-like elements extend outwardly from ~~said~~ the distal end of said shaft in flared relationship to one another, wherein the actuation means comprises:

a housing attached to the proximal end of said shaft;

a trigger pivotally attached to said housing; and
a spring biased piston attached to the proximal end of said rod and configured to slide within said housing so as to move said rod between the first and second positions;

~~wherein said first wire-like element comprises a proximal segment and a distal segment defining the hook-shaped configuration and said second wire-like element comprises a proximal segment and a distal segment, said second wire-like element distal segment defining the guide means, and when said wire-like elements are in the second position said first wire-like element distal segment extends in a direction toward said second wire-like element distal segment and substantially normal to said second wire-like element distal segment;~~

~~said first and second wire-like elements being adapted so that when said wire-like elements are in said second position, said first wire-like element distal segment and said guide means cooperate to define a gap therebetween for receiving said thin cord-like object, and further wherein said guide means serve to guide said thin cord-like object into engagement with said hook-shaped distal end of said first wire-like element when said wire-like elements are moved from said second position to said first position;~~

~~whereby said first wire-like elements are adapted to secure said thin cord-like object to said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from said second position to said first position;~~

(2) positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in ~~said~~ the first position;

(3) forcing the distal end of said shaft through the soft tissue and maneuvering ~~said the~~ the distal end of said shaft so that it is adjacent to the thin cord-like object which is to be grasped;

(4) positioning said rod and said wire-like ~~members~~ elements in ~~said the~~ the second position by activating said trigger of the actuation means, and maneuvering ~~said the~~ the distal end of said shaft as needed so as to position said the flared distal ends of said wire-like elements on opposite sides of said the cord-like object so as to define a gap therebetween for receiving and trapping the thin cord-like object; and

(5) thereafter positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in ~~said the~~ the first position by releasing the trigger of the actuation means, whereby ~~said the distal end of said first wire-like element guide means guide grasps said the thin cord-like object into engagement with said distal end of said first wire-like element and said first wire-like element grapples said cord-like object and carries the thin cord-like object back toward and into the distal end of said shaft as said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position, whereby the wire-like elements are adapted to secure the thin cord-like object attaches it to said distal end of said to said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position and release the thin cord-~~

like object when said wire-like elements are moved form the first position to the second position; and

(6) repeating steps (2) through (5) so as to further maneuver the distal end of said shaft to grasp the thin cord-like object and pass it through the soft tissue.